

Arthur Astor Carey House
28 Fayerweather Street, southwest corner
of Fayerweather and Reservoir Streets
Cambridge
Middlesex County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-1039

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

ARTHUR ASTOR CAREY HOUSE

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Location: 28 Fayerweather Street, southwest corner of Fayerweather and Reservoir Streets, Cambridge, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

Present Owner and Occupant: Mr. Benjamin Tilghman

Present Use: Private residence

Statement of Significance: One of the earliest Colonial Revival houses in the country and an important work of the architects Sturgis and Brigham.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: References are to Middlesex County Registry of Deeds.

1881 Arthur A. Carey buys land at Fayerweather and Reservoir streets from Amos W. Stetson, executor of the estate of James P. Melledege. Deed Book 1575, p. 536. House ("unfinished") first appears on city tax records in 1882, assessed to A. A. Carey.

1892 Frederick Kendall buys house and land. Deed Book 2115, p. 189. Through Arthur Magoun, he passes ownership to his wife Harriett M. Kendall. Deed Book 2140, p. 574.

1898 Anne M. Henshaw, wife of Samuel, buys house and land. Deed Book 2681, p. 113.

1928 Samuel Henshaw fixes boundary lines with his neighbors. Deed Book 5224, p. 123.

1930 Gertrude A. Thurston buys house and land. Deed Book 6470, p. 483.

1956 After the death of Gertrude A. Thurston, John Goelet buys house and land from H. Le Baron Sampson, executor of Thurston's will. Deed Book 8734, p. 385.

1961 Benjamin C. Tilghman and Elizabeth F. Tilghman buy house and land. Deed Book 9977, p. 121.

2. Date of erection: 1882.
3. Architects: John Sturgis (1834-1888) and Charles Brigham (18?-1925)
4. Original plans: Two floor plans by Sturgis and Brigham, dated September 30, 1881, are in the possession of Mr. Tilghman.
5. Alterations and additions:
 - 1898 An addition to the house was made by D. W. Power. Building Permit 7502.
 - 1963 The kitchen and laundry-room were remodelled with Stanley I. Phalen as contractor.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

A member of the Astor family of New York, Carey graduated from Harvard in 1879 and built 28 Fayerweather Street only three years later. He lived alternately in Cambridge and in Europe during the 1880's, and in 1889 he married an English woman. He taught English at Harvard, 1890-93, but seems mostly to have been privately employed. In 1904 he built a second house on Fayerweather Street and lived in Cambridge with his family for most of the rest of his life.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: An early exterior photograph of the house, showing all original trim and original roof line of the rear ell, is at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Photographic Department, 141 Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts. (See HABS photocopy.)
2. Secondary and published sources:

American Architect and Building News. Vol. XXI.
Boston: January 1, 1887.
Interior photograph of the stairhall.

American Architect and Building News. Vol. XXVII.
Boston: 1890.
Picturesque drawing of the house by E. Eldon Deane.

Cambridge Tribune. January 8, 1887.
Notes on an interior view published in American Architect and Building News of January 1, 1887.

Rettig, Robert Bell. Guide to Cambridge Architecture:
Ten Walking Tours. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press,
1969.

Prepared by Susan E. Maycock
Survey Associate
June 20, 1969

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A particularly early Colonial Revival house by Sturgis and Brigham built in 1881-1882.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent. Some remodelling seems to have been done prior to 1961, i.e. the small clothes hall and water closet between the living room and kitchen. Also, the cellar floor was lowered, and new foundations installed (because of termites) at some time. The back porch has a concrete floor, about 4 inches thick, which is clearly a later addition. Front porch was altered and the floor and steps have been renewed.

Much of the interior trim and detailing was removed (molded work and rosettes applied to ceilings and impost blocks, etc.) by a former inhabitant; but the faint outlines of such decorations can occasionally be seen in the front hall and library.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main body of the house is rectangular, 58 feet by 58 feet (five irregular bays), two-and-a-half stories, with a slightly projecting off-center pavilion. There are two ells: one with the dining room, the other with the kitchen and back pantry. The china closet is between these two ells.
2. Foundations: Rough blocks and pieces of bluestone are random laid, but have a flush outer face. The left side of the front of the house was at one time covered with a porch; consequently the foundation blocks here are rough, as they were not seen originally.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The material is 3-3/4 inch clapboards with a beveled lower edge. Above the foundation is a baseboard strip; there is a molded strip at the second-floor level; and the corners of the structure are panelled strips. It is painted white.

4. Structural system, framing: Six-inch thick walls, presumably stud.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: The front porch, which is now about 6 feet x 12 feet, is reached by six risers from a concrete plinth. Formerly, it extended from the front entrance to the north corner, and the railings for this part are in the basement. (At this northwest corner of house, a section of the corner strip was originally cut out to hold one of the railing posts; this has now been filled in, but is very evident.)

At the southeast corner of house, a porch or terrace 20 feet x 12 feet is raised on brick pillars about 6 feet off the ground and is approached by eight risers. There are turned colonial posts and balusters, similar to those on the front porch and a concrete slab floor.

The rear entry is reached by a modern stoop.

At the middle of north side of the house is the bulkhead.

A balcony extends over the front porch, supported on two scroll brackets with ends terminating in heads: a bearded male on the left, a female on the right. The balustrade features spirally turned balusters and posts.

6. Chimneys: Four are simple brick and taper slightly at the top. Two on the south side have chimney pots.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front door has twelve panels with engaged Tuscan columns on each side which support the balcony brackets. The back terrace door from the dining room is glass with twelve-over-one lights; the lower panel is solid. The door from the library is eight panelled with a fan light and simple molding. There are six panels in the rear door.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Most of the front windows have double hung twelve-over-twelve lights on the first and second floors; the dormers are six-over-six double hung lights. All windows have a molded frame, and the first floor windows feature a dentiled cap. On the second floor there is a Palladian window with dentils and a scroll keystone; the side lights are twelve-over-one. A small hall window with paired sashes of twelve lights each is on the first floor. A glass double door leads onto the front balcony from the sewing room on the second floor. Corinthian pilasters on either side of the double door support a broken-scroll pediment.

On the south side there are double hung twelve-over-twelve lights on the first and second floors with double hung six-over-one lights on the third floor. The form is the same as the front of the house. Below the second-floor windows are window boxes supported by Corinthian modillions; a similar window box is beneath the third-floor window on the north side and at the rear main bedroom on the second floor.

Most of the first-and second-floor windows have green shutters.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Essentially the house has three gambrel roofs. The one over the main house runs north-south. (The northern elevation has the angles of the roof axially symmetrical; but on the south side, the lower slope to the rear is much longer than the corresponding one on the front.) Each wing to the rear has a second gambrel roof which run east-west and are connected to each other. All roofs are covered with dark, rectangular, asphalt? shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Elaborate modillions under the base and raking cornices of the pediment over the entrance pavilion. Other eaves with simple dentil pattern are under the concealed gutter. The second floor extends perhaps 18 inches on the north end of the house and at the east end of the south addition. The rear extension has simple brackets below the eaves.
- c. Dormers: Two triangular and one rounded pedimental dormers are on the facade. Two dormers are on the south side of the southern extension; the two on the north rear extension have shutters.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: In the basement are finished rooms and modern concrete floors; the former laundry is in south end of the area.

The first floor has a large central hall with a living room ("reception room") to the north and a library to the south; the dining room is almost straight ahead to the south. There is a hall with closets; and a modern water closet is at the northeast corner of the main block leading to the kitchen. A panelled pantry separates the kitchen from the dining room.

On the second floor, bedrooms are located in the area over the library and dining room; the hall and small sewing room are over the main entrance. Over the living room and hall there is a bedroom and bath. There is a second bath over the pantry, a cedar room and hall over the kitchen, and a servant's room at the rear.

Four bedrooms, a bath, and a storage closet are on the third floor.

2. Stairways: The basement is reached by a half turn stairway with 13 winders and a simple wooden railing attached to the wall. Between the first and second floors there are stairways in both the back and front of the house. The back stairway features a half turn and 14 risers about 3 feet wide and two landings; the wainscoting is vertical tongue-and-groove with three beads, and there is a wooden hand rail. Seventeen risers (50 inches wide) form the half-turn front stairway, which has two landings. This stairway also has double newel posts elaborately turned in corkscrew form and balusters which are also elaborately turned and twisted; the wainscoting is panelled, and all is painted white. At the turns there are square posts which are half fluted (with half of that cabled). The final stairway is between the second and third floors at the front and consists of 15 risers with a half turn and landings. The square newels have ball finials and turned balusters which are simpler than the lower front stairs but of the same basic type.
3. Flooring: Two-inch wide hardwood. There is some modern covering and the front hall is set with shiny red tiles 2 1/8 inches square. The third floor has 4 5/8 inch painted pine flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: On the first floor the front hall is completely panelled (rectangular and square) and is painted white. There is a denticulated cornice molding and the ceiling is decorated with shallow beams that cross to form nine large panels. The junctures of these beams formerly had pendant drops, according to Mr. Tilghman, which have been removed. The library features built-in bookcases (here again, some applique has been removed) with Corinthian pilasters and pillars for the upper part and panelled pillars for the lower. The cornice has an egg-and-leaf pattern. Other rooms have simple ceiling moldings and plaster walls.

The second-floor main bedroom is panelled with wainscoting 40 1/2 inches high. Ceiling molding has a bead and reel pattern. The hall cornice is identical to the one on the first floor hall, and the wainscoting is 3 feet high. The hall, sewing room, and bedroom have rectangular panelled wainscoting and the back hall has vertical tongue-and-groove with three beads. The servant's room has no decoration.

Except for simple wainscoting in the south room, the third floor is not decorated.

5. Doorways and doors: The front door has a flat band around the frame with reeding. Doorways into the hall have a similar band around them with a cornice of Greek key dentils. There are Corinthian pilasters, panels over the doors with floral swags in very high relief (four per door and all seem different). The library door has eight panels and simple bead and reel molding. The library door to the back porch is a divided Dutch door with a semi-circular light and has the same moldings as the front library door. Other door moldings (on the insides of the frames, and away from the hall) are plain.

On the second floor the frames are molded and reeded with base and corner blocks and have six panels. The third floor has four-panel doors with simple frames.

6. Decorative features and trim: Decoration is concentrated in library, front hall, and back main bedroom. Mr. Tilghman said that this had been done because the other rooms were left undecorated for lack of money.

In the library the window frames and shelves have bead and reel molding. There is a Palladian window on the stair with four Ionic pilasters supporting an architrave with three floral swags on each side in high relief. The second floor south bedroom has a double set of panel blinds which are two fold (three vertical panels per wing) from dado panel below the window and up; but they do not fold into reveals. The rear bedroom has a window seat (closets on either side) with the opening framed in fluted Doric pillars supporting a denticulated cornice (same for doors).

7. Notable hardware: There are hot air grills, and simple solid brass fittings with oval knobs are found on the doors. Call bells are on the third floor with each bell having a different sound; call pulls are also in most rooms. The speaking tubes throughout are functional. A second-floor bathroom, which is certainly old, has 6-inch square white tiles, to a height of 6 feet 4 inches. The cellar has a dumb waiter that goes to the pantry above and much shelving.

8. Lighting: There are some gas butts remaining, and one simple gas fixture remains in the cellar; the rest are modern.
9. Heating: Front hall fireplace is on a raised brick hearth and has a 4 foot x 6 foot opening. The shelf, about 6 feet 2 inches from the floor, is supported on two brackets which are supported by two short Ionic columns. The brackets are decorated in low relief on each side--two maenads, one with a griffin, one with a pegasus; two winged figures, male and female; with winged cupids. All are surrounded by acanthus and floral sprays. There is a simple brick surround to the fireplace.

Library: A shiny pressed-brick hearth serves the black-painted brick fireplace. The mantel and chimney piece all continue the decorative motifs of the rest of the room. There is a very elaborate cornice with a central relief of a grotesque head (with bat wings), leaf swirls on each side, and other decorations.

Dining room: The fireplace is recessed into the wall with a simple brick surround.

Living room: The fireplace was removed by a former owner, and the parts are stored in the basement. The jamb panels have an ornate Roman candelabrum motif with cupids (one is a fawn) standing at the tops. One figure holds a band with the date 1882 on it. These appear to be made of compo.

South bedroom: A pressed-brick fireplace with a panelled surround features elaborate semi-Greek moldings. Reeded pilasters and a sun-burst panel support the shelf with brackets below and a panel and pilasters above.

Rear bedroom: There is a delft tile surround with two Ionic pilasters on each side. Above the fireplace are two Doric pillars supporting a high shelf over the central panel; above this upper shelf on brackets are small balustraded areas. (Later shelving has been fitted in over a large central panel over the fireplace where there may have been a mirror.)

Front north bedroom: The fireplace has panelled and relief decoration.

Third floor north bedroom: There is a semicircular brick opening at the fireplace and the shelf is also of brick on brick corbels.

South bedroom: A brick platform is in front of the flue for a stove.

The present heating is hot air (oil heat).

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: The front of house faces west. It is set on a rise of ground in a large corner lot with Fayerweather Street to the west and Highland Street to the north.
2. Landscaping, walks: A stone wall capped by a low wooden picket fence forms the border on the Fayerweather Street side, a curving path leads to the front door. There is a rear driveway from Highland Street. Ample trees and plantings provide a pleasant setting.

Prepared by Daniel D. Reiff
Survey Associate
May 4, 1968

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of a cooperative project between the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC), Albert B. Wolfe, Chairman, and the Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service. The Project followed a previous one conducted during the summer of 1964 under the same auspices and was initiated in September 1967 and completed in June 1969. It was under the general direction of Robert Bell Röttig, Associate Survey Director of the CHC, and James C. Massey, Chief, HABS. Miss Susan Maycock, CHC Survey Associate and graduate student in architectural history at Boston University, was responsible for the historical data; the architectural data were written by Daniel D. Reiff, CHC Survey Associate who was at that time a Harvard University doctoral candidate in the Department of Fine Arts; and the photographs were taken by George M. Cushing, Boston. Certain data were supplied by Dr. Bainbridge Bunting, CHC Survey Director and Professor of Art and Architectural History at the University of New Mexico.